

CLAIMS

1. A method for maintaining and promoting hair thickening comprising increasing the expression of keratinocyte growth factor (FGF-7) in hair follicle cells.
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2. A method according to claim 1, wherein expression of the FGF-7 is increased by applying to the scalp an external skin preparation containing one or more types of agents that increase the expression of FGF-7 in hair follicle cells selected from the group consisting of
10 adenosine, adenosine 5'-phosphoric acid, adenosine 5'-phosphate, CCPA (2-chloro-N⁶-cyclopentyladenosine), C1-IB-MECA (2-chloro-N⁶-(3-iodobenzyl)-9-[5-(methylcarbamoyl)-β-D-ribofuranosyl]adenine) and NECA (N-ethylcarboxyamido-adenosine).
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3. A method according to claim 2, wherein at least one type of the agent that increases expression of FGF-7 in the hair follicle cells is adenosine.
4. A method according to any of claims 1 to 3,
20 wherein the hair follicle cells are dermal papilla cells or outer root sheath cells.
5. A composition for increasing expression of FGF-7 comprising as an active component thereof an agent selected from the group consisting of adenosine,
25 adenosine 5'-phosphoric acid, adenosine 5'-phosphate, CCPA, C1-IB-MECA and NECA.
6. A composition according to claim 5, wherein at least one type of the agents is adenosine.
7. A composition according to claim 5 or 6 that is
30 an external skin preparation that maintains and promotes hair thickening by being applied to the scalp.
8. A method for screening agents that maintain and promote hair thickening, comprising: applying a candidate agent to cells, and selecting an agent that increases the expression of FGF-7 in said cells.
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9. A method according to claim 8, wherein increased expression of FGF-7 in the cells is determined

by measuring the amount of mRNA that encodes FGF-7
extracted from the cells.

10. A method according to claim 8 or 9, wherein the
cells are dermal papilla cells, immortalized dermal
5 papilla cells or outer root sheath cells.